

WEBINAR OVERVIEW

Alcohol and the environment: How to green alcohol control policies?

18 September 2023 | 13:00–14:00 CET

About the webinar

The link between alcohol and the environment is gaining attention as an area which requires further investigation. The environmental impacts of alcohol are observed across the entire production and consumption chain and include the depletion and degradation of water resources, greenhouse gas emissions, soil and air pollution and waste production (1). For example, the production of one litre of wine is estimated to require 870 litres of water (2), a demand which can stress the water supply for basic needs and agricultural purposes in affected areas. Food insecurity can also be exacerbated when the cultivation of crops such as hops, barley or grapes, required for the production of beer and wine, displaces the production of food crops (1).

Questions about the environmental footprint of alcohol arise at a time when approximately **2 billion people** in the world lack access to safe drinking water (3), about **770 million people face hunger** (4) and over **3 billion people** are estimated to live in situations that are **highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change** (5).

As the world faces the consequences of climate and environmental change, countries seek multi-sectoral, cost-effective solutions that preserve the natural systems that form the foundation of population health and well-being.

Alcohol consumption contributes to 3 million deaths each year globally (6) and affects social well-being and economic productivity (6). Given the wide range of health, social, economic and environmental consequences of alcohol, it is clear that alcohol undermines most aspects of the sustainable development agenda (7).

Effective alcohol control policies, therefore, have the potential to bring multiple health and environmental benefits. For example, if alcohol pricing included the cost of environmental externalities, it could reduce affordability, limit consumption and, in turn, minimize environmental damage. More work needs to be done, however, to

understand the linkages between alcohol and the environment and how best to achieve coherent, integrated and multisectoral policy actions.

In this webinar, we will explore the current state of evidence and knowledge gaps on the relationship between alcohol and the environment. We will reflect on the global mechanisms that exist that could support countries in the implementation of coherent alcohol control and sustainability policies, including the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (8) and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (9). We will explore whether countries are leveraging these mechanisms to advance policy action and what are the potential barriers or pitfalls.

Importantly, we will discuss the next steps to advance alcohol control policies and actions that include environmental considerations.

What do we aim to achieve?

This webinar will raise awareness of the environmental impacts of alcohol, assess the available evidence, share examples of countries facing the environmental burden of alcohol production, and look at how alcohol control policies can incorporate environmental considerations and processes to catalyse action.

Who should participate?

The target audience includes policy-makers, government officials and civil servants, civil society, researchers, local authorities and the public.

► Registration

Registration in advance is required to receive a direct link to the event. Please visit the webinar-specific registration link above for further details. Please contact us for more information on how to apply for consideration at: lessalcohol@who.int.

The event is organised by the Less Alcohol Unit of the Department of Health Promotion at the World Health Organization.

References

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2. Product Gallery. In: Water footprint network [website]. (<https://www.waterfootprint.org/resources/interactive-tools/product-gallery/>, accessed 11 August 2023).
3. World Health Organization. Drinking-water fact sheet. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022 (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water>, accessed 11 August 2023).
4. Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme, World Health Organization. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; 2021. doi.org/10.4060/cb4474en.
5. Pörtner H-O, Roberts DC, Poloczanska ES, Mintenbeck K, Tignor M, Alegría A et al., editors. Summary for policymakers. In: Pörtner H-O, Roberts DC, Tignor M, Poloczanska ES, Mintenbeck K, Alegría A et al. Climate change 2022: impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge and New York (NY): Cambridge University Press; 2022. doi:10.1017/9781009325844.001.
6. World Health Organization. Global status report on alcohol and health 2018. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565639>, accessed 14 August 2023).
7. Sperkova K, Anderson P, Llopi E. Alcohol policy measures are an ignored catalyst for achievement of the sustainable development goals. PLoS ONE 2022;17(5):e0267010. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0267010.
8. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. In: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [website]. (<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>, accessed 11 August 2023).
9. Paris Agreement. Bonn: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; 2015 (https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf, accessed 19 April 2023).

► About the Less Alcohol Webinar Series

The Less Alcohol Webinar Series sets out to start global conversations on contemporary policy issues critical to reducing alcohol consumption. The topics explored

through the series intend to draw attention to perceived blind spots in the policy sphere. For an overview of the 2023 edition of the webinar series, visit [here](#) and register for upcoming webinars below.

Alcohol and the environment: how to green alcohol control policies?	Alcohol monopolies: what does it take for alcohol monopolies to work?	Youth and alcohol: do new trends demand new solutions?	Measuring alcohol policy implementation: are existing tools and methods fit for purpose?
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